

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR LOCATING A NEARBY ALTERNATE VENDING MACHINE FOR A DESIRED PRODUCT

Abstract of the Disclosure

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A communication network (FIG. 1) makes available, to a first vending machine (102) of a plurality of vending machines, information from nearby ones of the plurality of vending machines for coordinating product availability and vending machine location.

10 The first vending machine then determines 502 that the desired product is no longer available at the first vending machine. Thereafter, the first vending machine obtains (504-520) the information including a location of the nearby alternate vending machine for the desired product. The first vending machine then conveys (410) the location of the nearby alternate vending machine to a customer who wishes to purchase the desired product.